



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton
National Park

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2005 05-02

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

Lost Cross-Country Skiers Found After Extensive Search

Grand Teton National Park rangers conducted an extensive search for two disoriented and lost cross-country skiers on Thursday evening, January 13, on the Teton Park Road between the Taggart Lake parking area and Timbered Island. Rangers finally located Hollis Webster, age 49, from Glen Ellyn, Illinois and her sister Lucinda Beier, age 53, from Normal, Illinois at 10:15 p.m. after a five hour search, involving more than a dozen park staff. The two women were cold, but otherwise in good condition.

Webster, Beier and two other sisters began their cross-country ski trip from the Taggart Lake parking area at 4:00 o'clock on Thursday afternoon. The four sisters intended to ski up the Teton Park Road and return by way of a ski trail on the west side of Cottonwood Creek which travels near the Climber's Ranch. The group split up shortly after beginning their ski when Leslie Mayer, age 43, of Glen Ellyn, Illinois and her sister decided to turn back. Webster and Beier continued to ski further, but eventually stopped to take shelter from high winds and blowing snow. When they resumed their ski, they became disoriented and traveled off route, inadvertently heading east across Baseline Flats toward the Snake River rather than west and south towards the Taggart Lake parking area. Daylight was fading and weather conditions at the time included ground blizzards, causing poor visibility.

Teton Interagency Dispatch received a cell phone call from Mayer at 5:30 p.m., requesting help in locating her two sisters. Webster and Beier had called Mayer from their cell phone to explain that they were lost and unsure about how to return to the parking area. Rangers responded and began an extensive search along and near the Teton Park Road. After initial search efforts failed to locate the two women, it became clear that the skiers were not where they intended to travel or thought they should be. The search was then expanded to include a broader area. Rangers were able to communicate with Webster and Beier until their cell phone lost power. During one conversation, Webster and Beier reported looking down on "flowing water" which prompted rangers to shift focus from the frozen Cottonwood Creek. Eventually, the skiers located some old buildings, took shelter and phoned again. Rangers instructed them to remain there and began searching areas where old buildings exist. The buildings turned out to be the old Bar BC dude ranch along the Snake River, a distance of two miles east of Climber's Ranch where they thought they were heading. Darkness and blizzard-like conditions made it difficult for searchers to find ski tracks or hear calls for help, hampering their efforts.

Park rangers caution winter visitors about beginning a ski or snowshoe trip late in the day, especially when adverse weather conditions such as blowing snow, poor visibility and low wind chill temperatures are occurring. In addition, winter recreationalists should always be prepared for the unexpected by carrying essential survival equipment in the event that an unexpected emergency requires spending more time than originally planned in the outdoors. Webster and Beier stayed relatively warm because they were wearing proper layered winter clothing with wind resistant shells.

This marks the first major search and rescue for 2005 in Grand Teton National Park.

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